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ABSTRACT

The National Teacher Center Resource Center surveyed the activities of 27 federally-funded state and territory teacher center projects from October, 1979 through May, 1980. The teacher center coordinators reported only the activities they wished to report. The background information about the coordinators showed that most were attached to teacher education units, and many worked less than 50 percent of their time at teacher center responsibilities. The activities reported by the teacher centers were in three areas: proposal development and review: technical assistance: and dissemination. Some major findings based on 204 activity logs were: (1) Proposal development and technical assistance were usually initiated by client groups whereas the state education agency (SEA) personnel were the most frequent initiators of dissemination services: (2) The majority of services were provided by teacher center staff or other SEA staff members for teacher center project staff: (3) Most preliminary activities for all services were of the clerical/management type: and (4) In-kind contributions in the form of personnel or materials were frequently noted. (FG)

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The Role of State Education Agencies in Teacher Center Activites: A Documentation of 1979-80 Activities

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INTRODUCTION

Upon accepting a total of $1.265 million during FY'80 from the federal Teacher Centers Program, 44 State Education Agencies (SEAs), through their designated state/territory Teacher Center coordinators, accepted three (3) mandated responsibilities:

(1) to review Teacher Center proposals;
(2) to provide technical assistance to federally-funded Teacher Centers; and
(3) to disseminate information regarding results and products of federally funded Teacher Centers.

The National Teacher Center Resource Center (Resource Center), located in Rhode Island and under contract with the federal Department of Education, provides assistance and services to the 44 funded states/territories as the SEA's fulfill their mandated responsibilities. In FY 80, the 44 states/territories served 89 federally funded Teacher Center projects.

State/territory coordinators, teacher leaders and local Teacher Center project directors* in the funded states/territories expressed an interest in the structure and types of activities being used to deliver assistance and services. In response to this request, the Resource Center documented and described state/territory activities from October 1979 through May 1980. The purpose of this paper is to present the documentation outcomes.

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* For the remainder of the paper, 'Teacher Center directors' or 'Teacher Center project staff' will refer to persons associated with federally funded Teacher Centers.

Methodology

The data for this study were obtained using: (1) state/territory profile surveys and (2) activity logs submitted by the state/territory Teacher Center Coordinators.

The profile survey contained information about the delivery of services in general, the organization of the state education agency, state Teacher Center personnel, and financial support for the state Teacher Center efforts. The profile survey was distributed by mail to all 44 states/territories. A separate report about the 35 states that returned the profile appears under separate cover.

The responses to the activity logs provided information in each of the three areas of service:

(1) the area of service (proposal development, technical assistance, or dissemination);
(2) the time period when the activity was conducted;
(3) the source or initiator of the activity;
(4) the role or affiliation of the provider of service and the method of selecting the provider;
(5) the activity itself, including preliminary preparations and information about the client groups served;
(6) the amount of time required for the activity;
(7) the problems encountered in carrying out the activity;
(8) the outcome(s), anticipated or actual;
(9) the types of resources and sources(s) of funding; and
(10) whether or not the activity was evaluated.

The logs also included a place for the respondent's name, position, and state/territory affiliation.

The data collection process for the logs included the distribution of a manual that explained the use of the logs; an orientation workshop to assist in the use of the manual and logs; and follow-up of a written nature, as well as oral communication from the Resource Center staff. Coordination and follow-up activities were carried out by the Curriculum Research and Development Center at the University of Rhode Island in coordination with the Resource Center.

In reviewing the results, it is important to keep in mind the selective nature of the documentation effort -- participation was voluntary and coordinators reported only those activities they wished to report. Finally, this process was a pilot effort and findings should be reviewed in that context.

Results of the Study

Of the 44 states eligible to participate in the documentation (because they had one (1) or more Teacher Center projects funded through the federal Teacher Centers Program during FY 80), 27 (61%) chose to do so. Twenty-five (25) of the 27 states participating in documentation also submitted profile surveys. These 25 states, which represent 57 percent of the funded states, returned 202 logs, or 99 percent of the 204 logs that were returned.

The following are the major findings based on the 25 profiles returned by the state/territory coordinators* who also submitted logs:

- Background information about the 25 state/territory coordinators, their roles and staffing showed that:
  - 20 of the 25 coordinators (80%) were attached to teacher education units and an additional 4 (16%) were in instructional service units;
  - Other roles of the coordinators often include that of National Council of States for Inservice Education (NCSIE) delegate (16/64%) and Teacher Corps liaison (13/52%);and
  - The 25 coordinators assumed their Teacher Center responsibilities on a range from 5 percent to 50 percent of their time and some coordinators (15/60%) had professional and/or clerical staff who work varying lengths of time (i.e., 5% to 100%).
- State level Teacher Center services were generally housed within the main office(s) of the SEA (22/88%).
- The federal Teacher Center budgets of the 25 states for FY'80 ranged from $5,600 to $168,300.

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* A comparison of this group with all 35 funded states/territories that submitted profiles shows no significant differences in responses.

- The 25 respondents to the profiles who also provided logs of activities accounted for $820,700 (65%) of the $1.265 million reimbursed to all 44 states/territories by the federal Teacher Centers Program for technical assistance and dissemination services during FY'80. When FY'79 carryover funds were included, an additional $154,600 (reported by 21 of the 25 states) was added to the $820,700 for a total of $975,300.

- All 25 respondents to the profile who also submitted logs documenting one (1) or more activities reported state in-kind contributions. Twenty-one (21) of the 25 states cited specific amounts of in-kind contributions (ranging from $700 to $52,000) which totaled $296,200; the remaining four (4) states indicated state in-kind support but did not specify an amount.

- Sixteen (16) of the 25 states had within their boundaries an additional 322 Teacher Center projects funded by sources other than the federal Teacher Centers Program.

Of the 204 activities reported by the 27 state/territory coordinators who submitted logs, 46 logs described proposal development and review activities (reported by 19 states), 92 logs described technical assistance activities (reported by 21 states), and 66 logs described dissemination activities (reported by 19 states).

The following are the major findings of the study based on the 204 logs returned by 27 state/territory coordinators.

- A review of the frequency of activities for each of the three (3) areas of services shows that:

  - The proposal development activities that were documented were provided at a generally consistent rate from October 1979 through May 1980;

  - The technical assistance activities that were selected for documentation were fairly consistent in frequency across the months, with November 1979 and March and May 1980 emerging as the peak months for this area of service; and

  - The dissemination activities that were documented took place or were completed with higher frequency during October 1979 and May 1980, with the remaining months showing similar frequency levels.

- Proposal development (24/52%) and technical assistance (50/54%) were most often initiated by client groups. State Department personnel were the most frequent initiators of dissemination services (38/58%).

- The majority of services were provided by the Teacher Center coordinator or other SEA staff and were done as part of their job responsibilities. Teacher Center project staff were also frequently mentioned as providers of service, although less often than the SEA coordinator and staff.

  - The state/territory coordinators were involved in providing 45 percent of the 46 documented proposal development activities, 23 percent of the 90 technical assistance activities that were logged (2 additional technical assistance activities contained no information about the providers of service), and 33 percent of the 66 documented dissemination activities;

  - State education agency staff, other than the state/territory coordinator, provided, on an individual basis, or in combination with other role groups, 58 percent of the 46 proposal development activities, and 38 percent of the 66 dissemination activities; and

  - Teacher Center project staff provided, individually or with other persons, 13 percent of the 46 proposal development activities, 17 percent of the 90 technical assistance activities, and 35 percent of the 66 dissemination activities.

- The majority (65%) of preliminary activities for all services were of the clerical/managerial type. This percentage increased to 83 percent when activities required multiple preliminary tasks, such as needs assessments and planning meetings. (See Figure 1)

  - In the area of proposal development, the overwhelming majority (72%) of activities included clerical/managerial preparations. When several types of preliminary activities took place to carry out an activity, clerical/managerial tasks in combination with conducting a needs assessment or holding a preliminary meeting were involved in 81 percent of all proposal development activities;

  - Technical assistance activities also required extensive clerical/managerial tasks (57%) and, in combination with needs assessment activities or preliminary meetings, accounted for 75 percent of the technical assistance services;

  - Similarly, dissemination activities were heavily dependent upon preparatory activities of a clerical/managerial nature (71%), with an additional 17 percent (87% in total) requiring a combination of clerical/managerial activities with preliminary meetings; and

  - A small number of the services (10/5%) did not include preliminary activities.

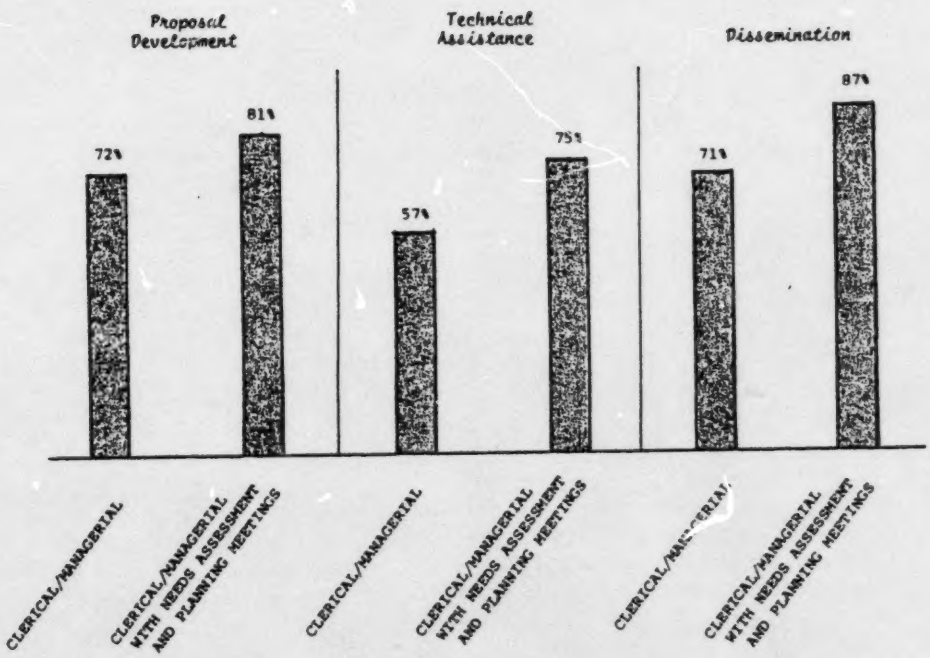

Figure 1: PRELIMINARY ACTIVITIES FOR EACH AREA OF SERVICE

- Actual activities that took place when the service was provided varied according to the area of service: (See Figure 2)

  - In the area of proposal development, activities most often consisted of conducting proposal review (28/61%), participating in planning meetings/making on-site visits (17/37%), notifying groups of critical proposal information such as deadlines (11/24%), and conducting proposal writing workshops (4/9%).

  - Technical assistance activities included participating in meetings about Teacher Centers or role relationships of various groups involved in Teacher Centers (39/42%), conducting workshops (28/30%), supporting travel to a regional or national conference to obtain information or upgrade skills (10/11%), and participating in planning meetings for Teacher Center conferences (9/9%).

  - The dissemination activities described most frequently were developing and presenting Teacher Center materials for conferences or workshops (26/39%), participating in planning meetings (23/34%), and preparing/distributing materials about Teacher Centers (21/32%).

- The client groups served by the states shows that the primary recipients of services (161/79%), as might be expected, were the Teacher Center projects funded by the federal Teacher Centers Program (161/79%). Clients with no Teacher Center funds also emerged as a frequent beneficiary of state services (74/36%) (See Figure 3).

- The type of persons, by role, most frequently involved in the activities were as follows: (See Figure 4)

  - Teacher Center project staff were ranked first or second as recipients of service across all types of activities.

  - Local education agency teachers and administrators consistently placed in the top four (4) types of persons receiving services and generally were among the top three (3) types of persons; and

  - Teacher Center policy boards were ranked among the top five (5) participants in Teacher Center services and were ranked second in frequency as recipients of technical assistance services.

- Less than 22% of the reported activities cited any problems. The few problems that occurred were described as technical/ logistical, diversity of the needs and interests of participants engaging in an activity, funding and scheduling.

- Close to half (93/46%) of all activities required one (1) to ten (10) hours of time on the part of state staff (Teacher Center coordinator plus other SEA staff), with few activities (26/13%) requiring implementation time of more than 40 hours on the part of state staff. Non-state education agency providers of services when providing services (89/44%), generally spent less than 20 hours of their time providing the services.

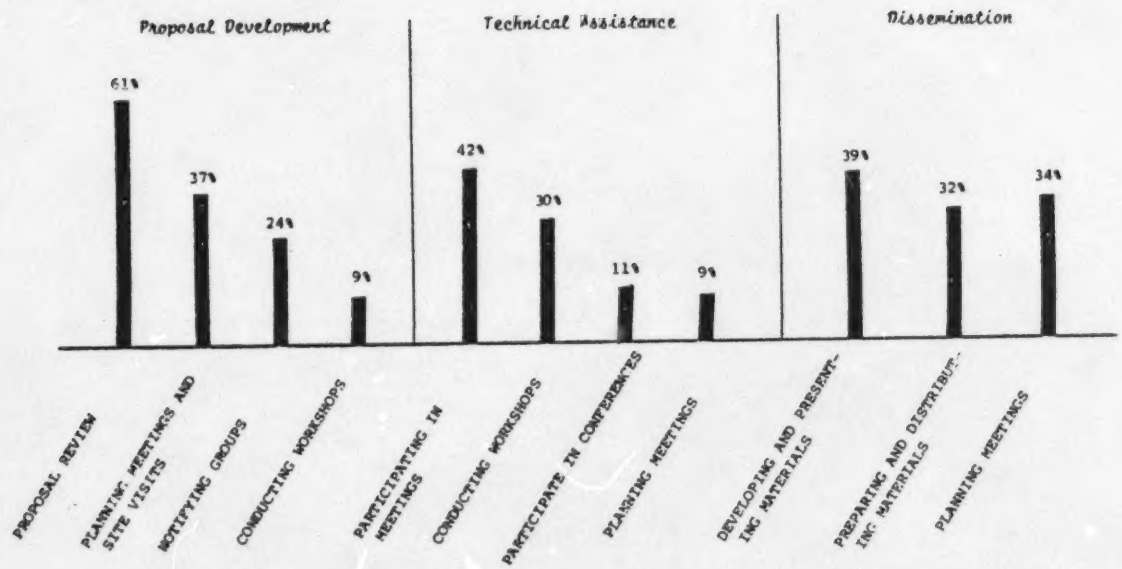

Figure 2: DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES FOR EACH AREA OF SERVICE

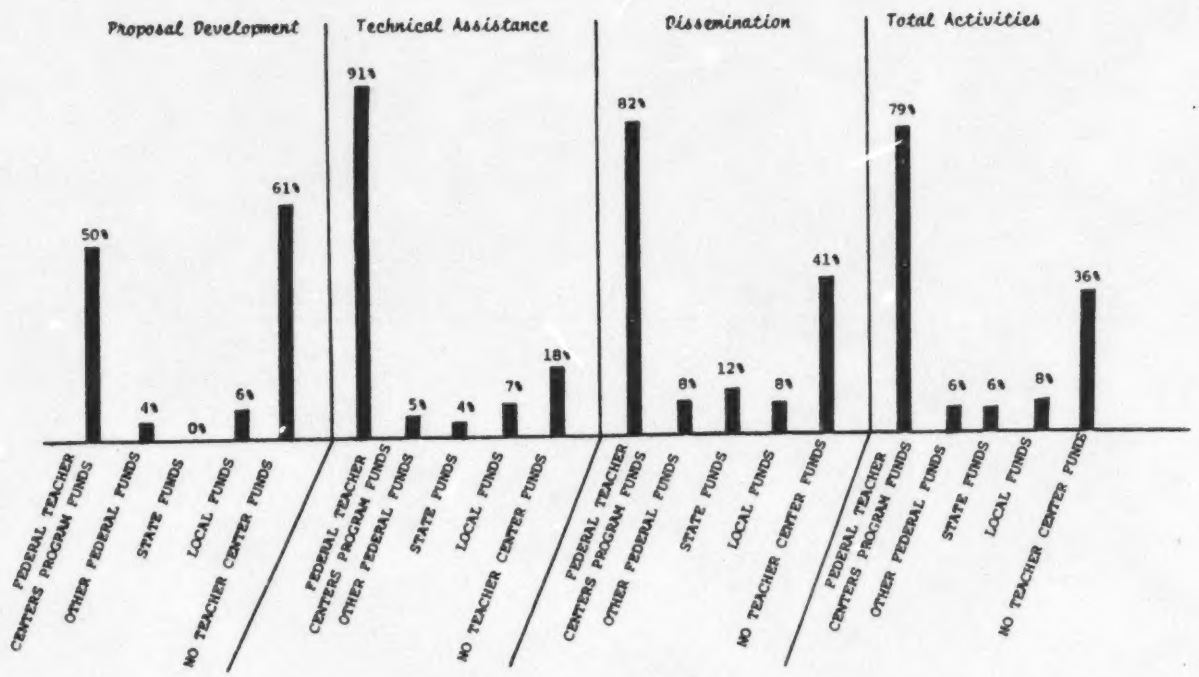

Figure 3: REPRESENTATION OF CLIENT GROUPS SERVED ACCORDING TO THEIR SOURCE OF FUNDS

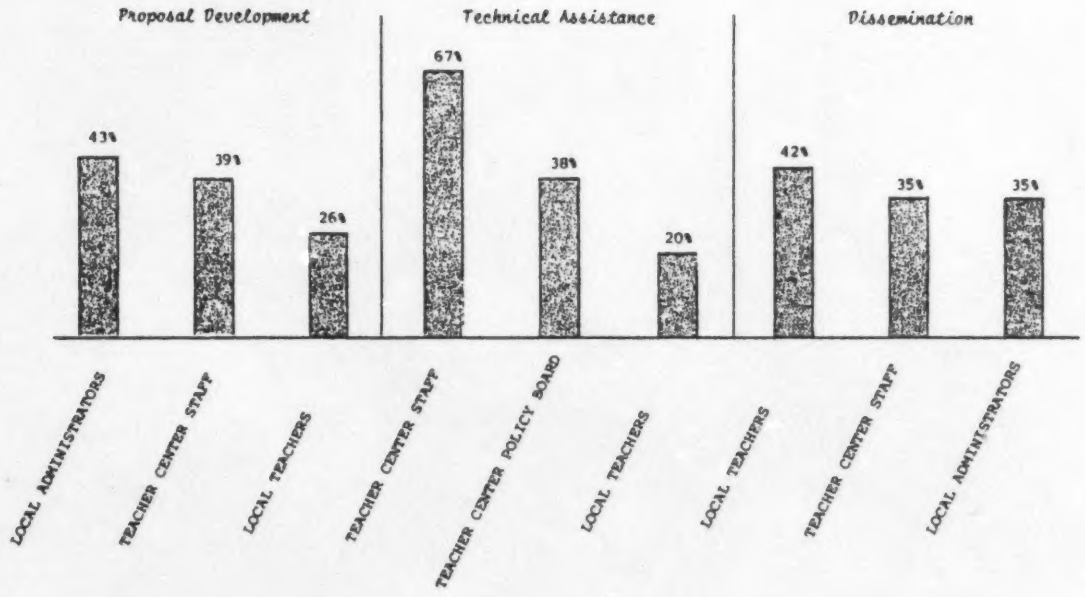

Figure 4: ROLE GROUPS MOST FREQUENTLY SERVED FOR EACH AREA OF SERVICE

- Based upon the 99% of documented activities which described outcomes, the following outcomes were cited most frequently.

  - In the area of proposal development and review, outcomes were reported as proposals submitted (36/78%), Teacher Center funded (11/24%), and/or increased proposal writing skills (8/17%).

  - Technical assistance outcomes often listed were improved communication/networking (46/50%), new ideas for future activities (27/30%), and/or increased knowledge or skills pertaining to a variety of areas (9/21%).

  - Most frequently described outcomes of dissemination services were described as increased knowledge/support for Teacher Centers (54/82%), dissemination of reference materials or proposal information (17/27%), and/or development/distribution of a newletter (8/13%).

As noted earlier, the 25 states that submitted both profiles and logs reported funds from the federal Teacher Centers Program for FY'80 of $820,700 (25 states) and, for FY'79, carryover funds (21 states) of $154,600, yielding a total of $975,300. The amount of money expended by the 25 states on 139 of the 204 activities documented and reported for this study was $132,796; this equals 13.6 percent of the total federal Teacher Centers Program funds received (FY'80 funds plus FY'79 carryover funds) by the 25 states.

- A total of 60 activities (29%) required no direct expenditure of federal funds. Direct expenditures of federal Teacher Centers Program funds were involved for travel, lodging or per diem costs in 85 cases (42% of all documented activities), for personnel in 56 cases (27% of all documented activities), and for materials or business expenses for 50 activities (25%). Most costs for an activity fell below the $500 range.

- Inkind contributions of resources appear to be substantial, as indicated by the frequency with which these contributions were noted (114/56%). Most often, this type of support was in the form of personnel (114/56%) and/or materials and business expenses (29/29%). In contrast with the findings about expenditures of federal money for travel (46% of the activities), very little inkind support (2% of the activities) was devoted to travel (See Figure 5).

- The findings show that 88, or 43% of all activities, were reported as being evaluated, with technical assistance activities most often evaluated (46/50%), followed next by dissemination activities (31/47%), and finally by proposal development (11/23%).

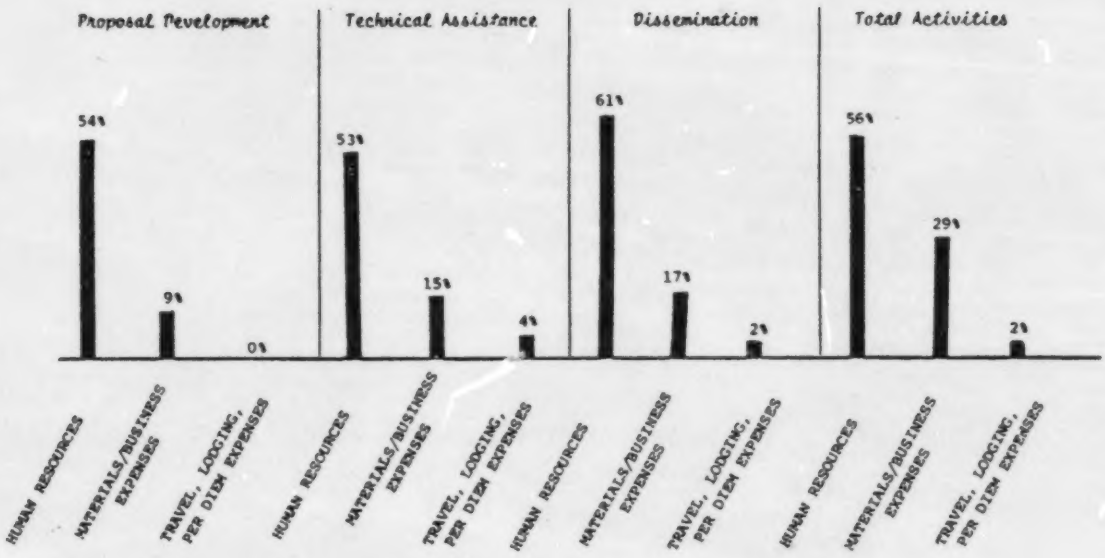

Figure 5: PERCENT OF ACTIVITIES WITH STATE INKIND CONTRIBUTIONS

The suggestions presented below primarily relate to methodology and are designed to address, in part, the incomplete and selective nature of the data. For any future documentation efforts, it is recommended:

(1) That the time span covered include a twelve (12) month period, thereby fostering the reporting of activities that may take place on a cyclical basis;

(2) That all states be encouraged to participate, thereby increasing the representativeness of activities carried out by states/territories;

(3) That documentation of all activities be required, thereby achieving a more comprehensive perspective of the services being provided to client groups, or, that criteria for deciding which activities to document be established, thereby enhancing the representativeness of the services described. Some examples of criteria include:

- varying cost levels of the activities;
- varying time commitments required to provide the services;
- varying ranges in the numbers and types, by role, of participants and client groups served;
- varying degrees of "success" of activities, as perceived by the providers and/or recipients of services;
- varying frequencies of activities, including one-time activities and those of a recurring or routine nature.

In a more general nature, the study raises questions for educational policy makers as well as persons specifically interested in Teacher Centers. Some questions of interest are:

(1) Is the appropriation of funds for SEA's to provide Teacher Center support services an effective approach/strategy for assistng projects or would alternative strategies be more effective?

(2) Should program accountability procedures be adopted for SEA recipients of Teacher Center funds?

(3) How does the role of providing technical assistance compare with other roles SEA's are asked to perform in relationship to federally funded programs?